



## Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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### House 5947

### The Health, Education, Welfare Committee

March 9, 2005

My name is Steven A. Florio and I am the Executive Director of Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. This commission is known as a one-stop center on all Deaf and Hard of Hearing matters. We deal with all deaf and hard of hearing individuals' needs every day whether they need resources, referrals, and training. That includes providing the Interpreter Referral Service.

On behalf of the RI CDHH, we support this bill to have the language changed to reflect today's standards.

#### 1) Recommendation #1:

Page 9 and Line 19 - please add, "and as set forth in regulations promulgated by the department".

Rationale: Today, only licensed interpreters can work in RI. In this bill, the department would allow someone who brings their own interpreter (usually from out of state) for national conference in RI which had happened several times, provided that this interpreter must have the proper certification in interpreting. However, there is no way for the department to keep track of their hours. Therefore, the regulations need to be developed as to how these individuals register with the department the number of hours they expect to work in RI. It would improve the controlled environment.

#### 2) Recommendation #2:

Probably at the end of the bill, please add, "An individual who violates the law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be fined not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500). The punishment for frequent offenders may be decided by the courts at their discretion but the fine can not be lower than one thousand dollars (\$1,000)." or better language you may have is fine with us.

Rationale: The board of the Interpreters for the Deaf has the authority to discipline interpreters who are licensed for the reason of the code of ethics violations, unprofessional conduct, etc. However, they could not do anything with those who are NOT licensed. Therefore, that is why the language needs to be added where anyone can prosecute individuals who play as an interpreter illegally.

These would close out the loopholes for those non-licensed interpreters to work in RI. The license program is proven very successful since the bill was passed in 1996 and became effective in 1999. The quality standard of interpreters has been raised to a higher bar. A good percentage of interpreters has stepped up to take training and eventually obtained the proper certification. I commend you all for this success.

In conclusion, on behalf of the RI CDHH, we support this bill with the recommended amendment.

I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity to share our position with you and I strongly encourage you to take serious consideration. For some reason, if more research is needed on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me for more resources that would help you to make a better decision. I can be reached by e-mail, [SFLORIO@CDHH.RI.GOV](mailto:SFLORIO@CDHH.RI.GOV).

Honorably Submitted by:

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